

Scotland and Rome Exhibition

I welcome this exhibition "Scotland and Rome", and its opportune timing, to coincide with the visit of the Bishop of Rome, His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI, to the United Kingdom. We in Scotland will have the privilege of welcoming him first.

The Italian Ambassador to the Court of St James has underlined the immense influence of Rome on the development of Western civilisation. Everywhere in Scotland we gather evidence of this: whether with our physical eye alighting on Edinburgh's new town, or with the eye of the legal eagle on Scots law, with the ear tuned to early Scots Renaissance music or with the imagination of the engineer focused on the construction of some of our finest buildings.

The Pope arrives providentially on the Feast of St Ninian, according to tradition educated in Rome and our first named missionary of the Christian faith in Scotland. The signature of Rome *SPQR Senatus Populusque Romanus* gave way to the chi-ro - the monogram of Christ or *labarum* by which Constantine prevailed, as some of our earliest Christian monuments show.

Indeed for a thousand years, Rome virtually belonged to the Popes and only ceased to be a papal city in 1870 at the time of the *Risorgimento*.

We would overlook the obvious if we failed to recognise that so much of Roman culture was insinuated in the development of Scotland, even after the Reformation, by those who were trained in its systems as Heralds of the Gospel. And if its ancient and beautiful language is still heard, it is likely to be in the liturgy of the Church.

Scotland's sons whether in the arts or in the Church made their own contributions to that cultural pot, be they painters such as Gavin Hamilton, antiquarians such as James Byers, or churchman as the Abbe Paul McPherson, who, in recompense for his services to the Holy See and to Scotland at the time of the Napoleonic invasion, was given a most beautiful chalice inscribed by Pope Leo XII, for the Church of Glenlivet!

I hope that all who visit this Exhibition will be stimulated to remember things they already know and learn new things to enrich their memories.

Most Rev Mario Conti
Archbishop of Glasgow
President, Heritage Commission, Bishops' Conference of Scotland